

Guardian Chapter: 6

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“What happened back there in the corridor?” Da Qing changed the subject. “Why did your ‘revealing mirror’ activate an alarm?”

“Something was tailing us,” Zhao Yunlan said, “but it ran away as soon as it was identified. It probably meant no harm.”

“Not the killer?”

“How could it be? You think I can’t even tell the difference between new ghosts and evil phantoms?”

Zhao Yunlan carried Guo Changcheng’s body around the corridors.

“Besides, you saw the handprint next to the corpse, didn’t you? That hand definitely wasn’t human... Damn, this dude is heavy. I’m gonna put him down somewhere.”

Zhao Yunlan threw Guo Changcheng down by the corner of a wall.

Chief Zhao stared intently at the troublesome trainee, seemingly wanting to just leave him there to die. But after a while, Zhao Yunlan kneeled down and took out a small bottle and sprinkled some of its contents around Guo Changcheng. He then bit his finger and swiped a drop of blood on Guo Changcheng’s forehead.

The blood instantly dissolved into his skin and the pale trainee immediately seemed to look somewhat healthier.

Zhao Yunlan lightly slapped Guo Changcheng across the head, “Useless piece of work. Such an annoyance.”

“Enough of that, Yunlan, look at your watch.”

Zhao Yunlan looked down to see his revealing watch turning crimson again. Da Qing let out a screeching meow.

Behind the two of them stood an elderly figure draped in a dark shroud.

The old figure turned back; it seemed to be leading them somewhere.

“A new ghost?” Da Qing rushed forward. “It must be out of its mind... Hey, why are you walking around during the day?”

“Shut it! Don’t you see she’s mute? And haven’t you realized she is still alive? She is walking on two feet! Have you lost your cat mind, fatty?”

Around an abrupt corner, the old woman vanished. A staircase which led to the roof greeted the two instead.

Da Qing sneezed, “I smell grudge.”

Zhao Yunlan picked up the cat, “It wasn’t the professor but the old lady who led us here. Let’s go up.”

One man and cat carefully mount the stairway. The steps they walked felt as if it were made of something squishy and alive. Numerous shadows flew out of the darkness, fiercely grabbing at whoever dared invade their territory, but the moment they touched Zhao Yunlan’s pant leg, they viciously bounced back.

“The government has a suicide count for every school. As long as the number stays within the maximum, nobody will investigate,” said Zhao Yunlan. “But Dragon City University has exceeded the limit in the past three years, and this building seems to be the only one tall enough for a surely lethal fall. Not to mention the maze-like interior must have trapped quite a few nasty things in here and their grudge, accumulating over time.”

They reached the top of the stairs but the door to the roof was closed with only a weak light shining through the crack. Zhao Yunlan took out an access card and opened the rusty iron door.

Zhao Yunlan held the lighter and steadily headed for the roof.

The rooftop of the eighteenth floor was open to a full view of both the lush Dragon City University campus and the bustling city centre.

A girl stood on the rooftop with her back to them.

Zhao Yunlan carefully probed, “Hey, student...”

Suddenly, the girl leapt over the fence and jumped off!

Zhao Yunlan instinctively rushed forward and swiftly reached out to grab her. His hand barely touched the girl’s back but it went right through her. The girl disappeared like a mirage.

The black cat bounced forward like a ball, “Well? Was it human?”

“I’m not sure, she was too fast.” Zhao Yunlan’s fingers twitched, “I didn’t have time to tell whether...”

Since birth, Zhao Yunlan has had the ability to see ghosts. But because of this, unless he took a closer look, it was difficult to tell a human apart from a ghost from just a glance.

The black cat was just about to say something but a series of pounding footsteps came from behind, and the same girl came rushing forward, her face obscured.

She sped up on her feet and bounced off the building.

Zhao Yunlan reached out and grabbed her shoulder but the same thing happened all over again; his hand went right through her, and she disappeared.

And so, again and again, girls came rushing forward in a suicidal marathon.

Zhao Yunlan tried to grab a hold of them each time, but not a single one of them was tangible. Soon he was soaked in sweat.

Da Qing gave up by the eighth girl and sat like a statue beside the frantic Zhao Yunlan, impatiently complaining, "Stop chasing after them. This must be an earthbound spirit or a remnant illusion from the actual suicide."

Zhao Yunlan ignored his meowing.

Zhao Yunlan had done some physical training but it obviously wasn't enough. A few rounds later, he was considerably out of breath.

The black cat sighed, "Can't you tell that she isn't human?"

"How do you know they're all the same person? When the next one comes, are you sure we're still in the same space? Rule number three: make no assumptions. Have you ate the rules along with your cat food?"

Zhao Yunlan gave the cat a firm and angry stare.

"You're scolding me? I am a few thousand years old... A little creature like you dares to scold me..." The black cat wagged its tail with a hint of guilt, muttering uncomfortably.

Zhao Yunlan didn't back down, "If you don't shut up, I will reduce your supply of cat food."

A wise cat trims its sails so Da Qing promptly changed his tone, "Meow..."

Just at this moment, the ninth suicidal girl came rushing forward. Zhao Yunlan shouted, "Hey girl, wait!!!"

Ignoring him, she shot forth like an arrow.

“Fucking hell!”

Zhao Yunlan, failing to grab hold of the girl once more, furiously slammed the cold, hard fence.

“Hmmm...” Da Qing waltzed forward, with two front paws holding the fence, gave the area a thorough sniff and said, “Actually, you might be right. While earthbound spirits are rather suicidal and they tend to repeat their deaths while being trapped for eternity, they usually aren’t in such a hurry to die.”

“Then what is it?” Zhao Yunlan asked.

“It’s grudge.” Da Qing wore a solemn expression on his plumpy, puffed face. “Suicide is an unnatural cause of death so these spirits have a high chance of being unable to reincarnate. Some of these spirits are trapped between the realms of the living and the dead, and they become incomplete and forget their identities.”

“Grudge certainly makes you uncomfortable but it’s not harmful, is it?” Zhao Yunlan questioned.

“It probably isn’t. But since grudge comes from spirit fragments, when more gather, they might become strong enough to solidify. That girl might be the result of countless shattered spirits forming a ‘grudge’.”

“What happens when they solidify?”

“Nothing really. Grudge is different from wrath. It’s not as vicious, only those infested with ghosts in the first place are haunted by grudge. Grudge definitely doesn’t have the power to cut through someone’s stomach,” the black cat explained. “So this can’t be our killer. Let’s just leave.”

Zhao Yunlan hesitated.

The black cat sighed, “Oh you, why are you so stubborn? The Guardian Order has been passed down from millenniums ago, those rules don’t matter anymore. Do you really have to be so persistent?”

“No, but I still think...” Zhao Yunlan was silenced by the approaching shadow of the tenth girl.

The man and the cat tensed up as the girl rushed forward and leapt over the fence, making a suicidal jump like all her predecessors.

Zhao Yunlan, sensing something different, pounced forward with all his might, grabbing the girl by her waist.

The blue veins on Zhao Yunlan's hands popped out as he struggled to pull her back up. This time, it was an actual person.

The black cat, astonished, quickly leaped on to the fence, its' emerald eyes staring intently.

Zhao Yunlan found himself in an awkward situation. It was particularly difficult to hold a person and pull her back up.

One of his legs was trapped between the fence while his whole upper body was about to succumb to gravity. The girl, dangerously dangling from the eighteenth floor, suddenly regained consciousness and started screaming and squirming in terror.

Zhao Yunlan desperately yelled, "If you keep moving, we're both gonna die! Stay put!"

Just then, the fence cracked; perhaps due to being rather old, and it begun to loosen up.

Not having noticed it, Zhao Yunlan continued, "Stay calm. Don't be afraid. Hang in there..."

Suddenly, with a loud "clang", the fence broke.

Zhao Yunlan heard eerie laughter. It was as if the entire roof was flooded with people, and the crowd cheered with gloating giggles, glad to see the two on the verge of death.

Da Qing frantically screeched, "Meow!!!"

At this crucial moment, a figure burst through the door of the rooftop, and with lightning speed, dashed forward as the fence was about to free fall.

Zhao Yunlan rapidly turned over and pushed the girl back on to the roof; the person who dashed forward grabbed the girl just in time.

Then, Zhao Yunlan, barely holding on to the ledge of the roof, perilously hung mid-air.

Da Qing finally realized the person who rushed forward was Professor Shen.

Shen Wei, quickly pushing the girl back on to the roof, grabbed ahold of Zhao Yunlan, "Give me your hand, quick!"